

IN QUEST OF YESTERDAY A HISTORY OF HALIBURTON

by NILA REYNOLDS

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Thirtieth Instalment

THE MINDEN STORY
Chapter 11

(Continued from last week)

Children of the 1960's miss much of the magic which was the heritage of the youngsters of yesterday. They can never know the wonder of the first sight of the alien dragon-like engine squatting in the familiar barn yard, its firebox, tended by someone who at first glance might be a black gnome, glowing red while its tangle of singing belts powers the chunky separator digesting prodigious quantities of grain sheaves on the barn floor.

During the hours when familiar faces of father, brothers and neighbors grow black in the dusty mows and the air of the whole farm yard is filled with sifting chaff, the throbbing machinery pours out its golden treasure trove, the reward of all the hours of labor expended during the planting, cultivating and harvesting of the crop.

Not until sunset does the laboring engine die with an ear-splitting scream which is the signal to the men to wash off the grime and prepare for supper. And what a supper! Such mountains of snowy mashed potatoes, colorful vegetables and meat, such rivers of gravy and forests of pickles and relish. Threshing was a time to try the mettle of the best farm cook in the days when cooks were judged by the way they fed a threshing crew during a "set" which on the best farm sometimes lasted two days.

Yesterday almost everyone who farmed raised a crop of grain and threshed every year. Today most of the fields which once grew golden in the sun warmed days of August are seeded with hay or pastured.

The farmers in any given area who still thresh can be numbered on the fingers of two hands. The machines which do operate are powered by tractors or diesel engines.

Like the thunder of logs through Sanderson's rapids or the cry of the ox driver to his straining team, the whistle of the great steam threshing engine is silenced. It will never again echo across the glory of the autumn hills.

Other than the farms, Minden's first industry was probably a saw mill built by William Gainer on Beaver Creek, lot 9, concession A, Minden township. At a Women's Institute meeting held in 1951 Mrs. McElwain had this to say in a historic-

al sketch: "A family of Gainers laid the first plans for Minden village. They later built a sawmill and a large boarding house at Allsaw Narrows and ran a tug boat on these waters in connection with the lumbering development."

According to Mrs. Fairfield's history Robert Gainer and William Gainer lived in Minden village but James Gainer built on the Scotch Line and his brother John at Mountain Lake. The new building housing the Dept. of Lands and Forests at Minden and the offices of the Ontario Hydro are both built on land once owned by the Gainer family.

By 1863 Mr. Richard Smith had opened a second saw mill. Some sources say that the following year Hugh Workman of Lindsay, for some years the mail carrier to Minden, was so impressed with the water power possibilities of the Gull River a mile north of the village that he constructed a saw mill on the south side of the falls and a grist mill several stories high on the opposite side.

In 1873 Mr. Workman, with his brother-in-law, Thomas Stinson as bookkeeper and assistant manager, bought up several hundred acres of good timber adjacent to the river, also the power rights at a total investment of \$10,000. Twenty years later Mr. Workman retired and the business was purchased by Thomas Stinson and sons who discarded the famous mill stones which had ground the townships' flour for so many years in favor of a \$6,000 roller system. Older Minden residents who remember when the mill stones were used say that the flour never tasted as good afterwards.

To the Stinson saw mill which boasted both a planer and a matcher, local farmers hauled logs cut from their bush lots to be sawn at \$3 per thousand. Lumber for export was drawn by team to the railway station at Gelert.

A son of Thomas Stinson, Samuel Frederick, who passed away in January 1961 at the age of 92, succeeded his father as owner of both the lumber and flour mills. In 1911 S. F. Stinson moved to Toronto to found the Stinson Lumber yards there. He later became a director of the Ontario Retail Lumber Dealers' Association and the Lumberman's Credit Union.

As for the Stinson mills at Minden, before the Orillia Light & Power Commission began their dam project they were sold in 1929 to Lewis Pritchard for wrecking. The timbers and lumber which were salvageable were sold and Mr. Edward W.

Wright, who was building a barn that year purchased six of the great girders from under the grist mill which were still sound. They can still be seen in his barn. As an indication of the kind of timber which once grew in the area, each of these 12 inch square stick of unblemished pine was 44 feet long.

In 1932 the Minden Echo published a poem expressing what the Stinson mills at Minden had meant to the growth of the community. The author used the pen name "Old Timer" but there is an indication that it may have been written by someone closely connected with the Stinson family.

THE MILLS

The old grist mill at Minden;
The half has not been told,
Had I the knack of writing,
Its tale would I unfold.

Two mills there were at Minden,
The river ran between,
The grist mill and the saw mill
Whose saws were sharp and keen.

For many years they stood there,
One each side of "the slide,"
And faithfully gave service
To the country far and wide.

The constant roar of the rapid
Was sweet music to my ear,
Yet some who did not love it
Regarded it with fear.

Many a house was builded
With lumber from that mill,
While flour and meal were furnished
The hungry mouths to fill.

Many a fire was kindled
With slabwood from the pile,
Which kept "the home fires burning"
For many a circled mile.

Many a man was anxious
An empty purse to fill
Earned there the needed dollars
By working at "the mill."

Many a youth just starting out,
The "pot of gold" to seek,
Began the venture bravely
And worked there by the week.

Who were the men who labored
There?

Let's have a little jest;
Each may have been a good man,
But one we know was Best.

The list is long, too great the task
To name them one by one;
Some may chance to read this
rhyme,
But some—alas—are gone.

To build a home, to warm the
hearth,
To furnish daily food,
To give employ to man or boy,
Who will not say 'twas good.

But there were things of yester
year,

I pen it with regret,
And though the "mills" have disappeared,
Their memory lingers yet.

—Old Timer.

When the last vestige of both historic mill buildings had been removed, the way was clear for the construction of the hydro dam and power plant which was officially opened at a dedication service held on October 25, 1935. By December of that same year electricity lit the homes of Minden and the gas lanterns which had illuminated the streets of the village since 1910 were retired in favor of the more modern electric street lamps.

One of the first acts of service to their community performed by the Women's Institute of Minden which was organized in 1907 was the purchase of the three gas lanterns. One was located on the north side of the new iron bridge, one stood on the main street while the third lit the entrance to the town hall. The first "lamp lighter" was Mr. Langdon who received a salary of \$15 per annum. He was followed by Mr. C. Kirkwood.

Another poet, calling himself "Anon" chronicled the passing of the mills in a charming bit of verse which is reproduced here with the kind permission of the author.

THE MARCH OF PROGRESS

From the flow which turned the mill
stone,
Where off' came the slow ox team;
Soon through man's inventive genius,
Far off city lights shall gleam.

When the restless tumbling waters,
Cradled in their native hills,
Yield a power never dreamed of,
When they ran the rustic mills.

Why then stay the march of progress?

Loathe to mar the ancient scene,
Still unmindful, higher service
Dawns upon the old millstream.

Rather would we learn the lesson,
'Ere the future years unfold;
Not to let life's precious current
Travel onward, uncontrolled.

But to use the latent forces,
God has given us today;
Welcoming the higher service,
Stepping stone along our way.

If we lose the old time landmarks,
Nobler still shall be the streams;
When the flow which turned the
mill-stone,
Lights the city of our dreams.

—Anon.

(Continued next week)

THE ECHO
PHONE NUMBER
IS 350



TRUMBLE'S
HAIRSTYLIST
Mrs. Dorothy McPhaden
Mrs. Ronnie Howe
PHONE 258

Stanhope Council

The following is the minutes of the February 1 meeting of Stanhope council with all members present.

Moved by John Broderick, seconded by Allan Sisson, that the minutes of the previous meeting be adopted as read. Carried.

Moved by Alex Hewitt, seconded by Allan Sisson, as the Chamber of Commerce is the only active body advertising our tourist industry in the County of Haliburton, which is practically the only industry we have, I will propose that we grant the Chamber of Commerce \$200. Motion lost. Alex Hewitt and Allan Sisson voted yea. Broderick, Cowen and reeve Sawyer voted nay.

Moved by Alex Hewitt, seconded by Allan Sisson, that we write Mr. A. Malton regarding the Big Hawk Lake road committee, stating that we only agreed to spend \$100 on the parking area, which will be done as soon as conditions will allow in the spring. Carried.

Moved by Alex Hewitt, seconded by Allan Sisson, that we ask the district engineer, Huntsville, for the approval to call for tenders to purchase a new snowplow

and automatic wing. Carried. Moved by Allan Sisson, seconded by Wm. Cowen, that the correspondence be filed for future reference. Carried.

Moved by Wm. Cowen, seconded by John Broderick, that the council make a donation of \$100 each to the Chamber of Commerce and Scenic Highway 35 Assn. Carried.

Moved by John Broderick, seconded by Alex Hewitt, that we accept the road superintendent work voucher No. 2 in the amount of \$708.10. Carried.

Moved by John Broderick, seconded by Allan Sisson, that we notify Mr. Roy Seaman that we wish to retain him as assessor for the year 1961 at the same salary. Carried.

By-law No. 2-61 for the purpose of spending money under the Highway Improvement Act, received the three readings and passed. Carried.

Moved by John Broderick, seconded by Alex Hewitt, that the accounts amounting to \$7.93 be paid. Carried.

Moved by John Broderick, seconded by William Cowen, that this meeting now adjourn until March 1 at 10 a.m., or until called by the reeve. Carried.



THIS WEEK'S
SPECIALS

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HALIBURTON

At time of writing temperatures have moderated and it is a great relief. It has been a very cold January.

Miss Ann Lightfoot of Toronto was a visitor to Haliburton last week.

Mr. Ross Curry of Haliburton was a visitor to Oakville one day last week.

It was good to see our old friend Mr. Jimmie Johnston and his family from Essex visiting for a couple of days here last week. Jimmie is now principal of the school at Essex.

Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Roberts of Toronto were visiting with relatives in Haliburton last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Brohm are spending a few days vacation in Oakville this week.

Mr. Edwin Davies, who is employed with the OPR at Lindsay spent the week end at his home here.

Rev. and Mrs. Geo. D. Petrie are spending a three week holiday in sunny Florida.

Miss Sheila Bell of Toronto spent the week end at the home of Mrs. B. Bernstein.

Mrs. C. E. Sedgwick of Haliburton is visiting at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Roy Neville in Lindsay this week.

Miss Sandra Archer and friend of Oshawa spent the week end at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Max Archer.

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Elstone and daughter Judy were visitors to Peterboro over the past week end.

Mr. Philip Finlay was a business visitor to Niagara Falls last week.

Mrs. Mervyn Elstone was a visitor to Peterboro on Saturday last.

Mr. Boyd Austin of Haliburton was a visitor to Toronto a week ago. He attended the hockey game between Toronto Maple Leafs and Chicago Blackhawks.

Mr. and Mrs. James Green of Toronto spent the week end in Haliburton.

Mr. and Mrs. Ronnie Grant of Haliburton were visitors to Toronto last week.

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